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version of Jews to Christianity, should hear at their meetings not only, as you know is usual, the doctrine of Jewish Restoration, but also, occasionally at least, plain and Christian statements of the anti-Restorationist side of the Jewish question. I am very glad to find that my motive for giving utterance to my sentiments on the occasion alluded to has been understood and appreciated, not only by those who think with me upon this particular subject, but by many of those my doctrinal opponents, who desire, as all good men should do, that even those arguments which directly militate against their own conclusions, should be fairly stated, and as fairly heard and weighed.

But, as I have said, my speech was *necessarily* controversial. If our interpretation of the prophecies be right, yours must certainly be sadly wrong. And I cannot be surprised, and I am not at all sorry, that an attempt should be made, from your side, to controvert those statements which I most deliberately made, and am quite prepared to maintain, but which are, of course, fatal to your whole scheme of Jewish Restoration.

Such an attempt has, I see, been lately made in your pulpit. I have before me the published sermon of a well-known Restorationist preacher, in which, feeling, as he says in his introduction, that, if our statements be found scripturally correct, you must, in all candour, relinquish your expectation that the Jews will be restored to Palestine; he endeavours, from a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians<sup>3</sup>, to disprove two of

<sup>3</sup> Gal. iii. 17.

those statements<sup>4</sup>, more especially that most important one, that *God's national covenant with the Jews has vanished away*. This Sermon, which, as it attacks the principal arguments, and quotes the *ipsissima verba* of my speech, I am bound to consider as an intended formal reply, was, I perceive, not only preached at your invitation, on a particular occasion, and in the presence of a considerable number of clergymen from various parts of the country, but also published by the request of yourself, and others of those who heard it<sup>5</sup>. I am bound also to suppose, that, appearing before the public under such auspices, it is regarded as an excellent and convincing answer to at least two of my anti-Restorationist arguments. I should, therefore, I think, be deemed uncourteous, either if I were to take no notice of a carefully prepared composition, which evidently stands so high in the estimation of yourself and the advocates of Jewish Restoration; or if, taking notice of it, I were to address my remarks to any other person than yourself.

But, before I advance to a consideration of the arguments of the Sermon, let me express to you my great satisfaction at finding in it the emphatic declaration, that "Mosaic Judaism is utterly abrogated."

<sup>4</sup> My Speech contained *six* arguments against the doctrine of Jewish Restoration. The preacher has left untouched *four* of them, viz., those derived from *prophetic chronology, the catholic nature of Christianity, the principle of prophetic interpretation invariably adopted by the Apostles of Christ, and the existence in the Old Testament of clear prophecies of the complete destruction of Jewish nationality*. These four arguments remain untouched.

<sup>5</sup> See Preface to the Sermon.

The preacher says, and you, I suppose, say with him, that it is a proved fact, that "Mosaic Judaism is done away, taken away, and vanished away<sup>6</sup>." So far, so good. Then, of course, the temple, which, with all its gorgeous sacrificial services, was merely the development of the Mosaic tabernacle, may be placed amongst the "beggarly elements"<sup>7</sup> of a transitory system, which now belongs to the instructive history of the past. And then, of course also, those eloquent and glowing passages of ancient prophecy, which are the *classica loca* of modern Restorationist writings, but which contain within them, inseparably embedded, as it were, in their very substance, the plain predictions of bloody and acceptable sacrifice<sup>8</sup>, must be erased from the Jewish

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 12—24 of the Sermon.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. iv. 9.

<sup>8</sup> The preacher says, in one of the notes to his Sermon (p. 23), "It is easy to excite a smile at the *supposed* renewal of Levitical sacrifices." I conclude from this remark that he does not himself anticipate their renewal; but he should remember that sacrifice was not merely a *Levitical* or *Mosaic*, but also an *Abrahamic* thing; and therefore that the argument of his Sermon, if correct, would prove the restoration of *Abrahamic sacrifices*. But it is quite wrong to suppose that Restorationist divines do not contemplate the possibility of the renewal of sacrifices in Palestine. My excellent friend Mr. Bickersteth, a very high authority amongst Restorationists, in his work on the Restoration of the Jews, says, respecting the *sixtieth* chapter of Isaiah (p. 217), that "the whole of it relates to the future glory of restored Israel." Now that chapter happens to contain the very plainest predictions, according to the Restorationist scheme of interpretation, of a future temple, with future sacrifices, in the land of Palestine. The prophet writes, in the *seventh* verse, "All the *flocks* of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the *rams* of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up *with*

expectations of the future; nor, as far, at least, as they are concerned, must we be wondered at when we say, that *Judaism has been fulfilled by Christianity*<sup>9</sup>.

*acceptance* on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory." He writes again, in the *thirteenth* verse, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." These two passages, as a part of the whole sixtieth chapter, relate, according to Mr. Bickersteth, to the future restoration of the Jews. Then, of course, they are to rebuild their temple, and offer again their bloody sacrifices; and both these acts are to be pleasing in God's sight, although our Saviour, as we have been taught to believe, is our only Temple and our only Sacrifice. But, in justice to Mr. Bickersteth's *Christian feeling*, I must say (and I say it most thankfully) that the idea of the restoration of sacrifices is evidently one which is most repugnant to his mind. He describes it as a "*difficulty*." "They are (he says) *literally predicted*; and yet the Apostle speaks of their being *taken away*." In order to get over the "*difficulty*," he suggests (p. 55) that the restored bloody sacrifices may be used, as the Lord's Supper is now, "*as memorials of the completed sacrifice of Christ!*" What a melancholy instance of the miserable shifts to which such excellent Christian men as Mr. Bickersteth are reduced, by having entangled themselves in the unchristian system of Jewish interpretation! But to return to the preacher. In order to see how he escapes from this "*difficulty*," I have referred to his work entitled "*Popular Lectures on the Prophecies relative to the Jewish Nation*;" and there I find, that while with Mr. Bickersteth he applies the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah to a future restoration of the Jews to Palestine, he quietly omits those two very passages which I have just quoted. Nor, in giving the scriptural extract with inverted commas, does he present us, as is usual, *with any marks of omission*. I cannot think that the "*difficulty*" is fairly escaped in this manner.—See M<sup>c</sup>Neile's *Popular Lectures*, pp. 170, 171.

<sup>9</sup> I find, in one of the notes to the published Sermon, the reproduction of an argument which I have often heard dwelt upon by Restorationist speakers, and which, by the triumphant manner in which they put it before their hearers, they seem to think a very

On the whole, I must congratulate both the preacher and yourself, and ourselves also, on the very *modified*

good one. It is this: *Certain* predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah *have been literally* fulfilled; *therefore all* the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah *must be literally* fulfilled. The preacher assures you, that unless a Christian Missionary to Jews is prepared to allow to the Jew the force of this argument, and "*plead for time*," he has no right to expect any success in his Missionary operations.

Now, first of all, let us see whether this so-called argument will bear the simple application of the *reductio ad absurdum* test.

"The Jewish argument stands thus (I quote the preacher's words): If Messiah be come, all things predicted of Him must be fulfilled. Some things predicted of Him are not fulfilled. Therefore He is not come."

"The Christian responds, *Nego majorem*. It is not true that, if Messiah be come, *all* things predicted of Him must be *already* fulfilled."

And so he tells the Jew to *wait*, and assures him that the other things which are not now fulfilled will be fulfilled hereafter, when Christ comes again.

Very well: The Jew now opens his Old Testament, and reads to the Christian the Messianic prophecy of the forty-fifth Psalm. "Here," he says, "are many things plainly and literally predicted of our Messiah, which, confessedly, have never been fulfilled by your Christian Messiah. The Messiah of our prophecy was to be a man of surpassing personal beauty and eloquence. Girt with the sword of victory, he was to ride prosperously in the majesty of his terrible power. His arrows were to be sharp in the breasts of all his foes. A mighty ruler, he was to wield the sceptre of righteousness. All his garments were to be redolent of the perfumes of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. So eminent was he to be amongst the monarchs of the earth, that even kings' daughters would esteem it a high honour to be placed amongst his concubines. At his right hand was to stand the Queen, in gold of Ophir. The princes, his sons, were to be set by the father as viceroys over numerous subject nations of the earth. Such was to be the Messiah of our prophecies, and such his glory; and such, certainly, your Messiah never was.



form which Jewish Restorationism has assumed in the pages of this Sermon. Its more revolting features,—

But you tell me, that when he comes again he will be such. Then, with that understanding, I will become a Christian. I never rightly understood what Christianity was before; but now I clearly perceive, that, in embracing your Christianity, I need not give up a particle of my Judaism. Henceforth, therefore, I am a Restorationist Christian."

God forbid that I should ever think it possible for any Christian Missionary to encourage the Jew in his expectation of *such* a Messiah; but then, at the same time, he must utterly reject, as untenable, the preacher's argument, that *because certain predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah have been literally fulfilled, therefore all the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah must also be literally fulfilled.*

But, in the second place, as it is clear that the Christian Missionary cannot, without a sacrifice of his Christianity, destroy the force of the Jewish argument *by pleading for time*, how ought he to answer this syllogizing Jew?

He ought to reply by denying the truth of the assertion, *that, if Messiah be come, all things predicted of Him must be fulfilled.* All the prophecies of Christianity, including, of course, the person and character of Christ, were *necessarily* written in *Jewish language.* It could not be otherwise. It was utterly impossible, in the very nature of things, that Christianity could be clearly revealed, *just as it was to be*, in the sentiments and imagery of Judaism\*. And therefore St. Paul, in speaking on this very point, calls Christianity,

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\* It would be well if, in our Christian compositions, we were to avoid, more than we do, the use of *religious Jewish imagery*, which is now *unmeaning* in its literal sense, and calculated to mislead. However, Christian taste is better than it was once: witness the two following lines from "an Epytaphe on Doctor Juell, Bishop of Sarisburie:" published in the reign of Elizabeth. After describing the delight with which all the inhabitants of heaven welcomed the arrival of the good Bishop, the poet thus concludes:—

"And Abraham rends his clothes and bouels out his brest,  
And sayth to Juell, Jumpe in here, and take thye quiet rest."

See Select Devotional Poetry of the reign of Elizabeth, II., 513. Park. Soc. edit.

though, perhaps, in some of the expressions, a practised eye might even here detect them,—are certainly not pro-

*as long as it was concealed in Judaism*, “the wisdom of God in a *mystery*” (1 Cor. ii. 7), and quotes a passage from the writings of the *evangelical* prophet, Isaiah, to show that the new religion which Christ introduced into the world, and which, when he wrote, *had ceased to be a mystery*, had never, till the actual appearance of the Saviour, “entered into the heart of man.” (Compare 1 Cor. ii. 9, and Isa. lxiv. 4.) To say, therefore, that every prediction of Christianity in Jewish prophecy must be *literally* fulfilled by Christianity, argues an ignorance of the nature of Christianity itself. The Jew must be plainly and honestly told, that though our Saviour first appeared amongst Jews *as a Jew*, and therefore fulfilled *some* of the prophecies literally, He did not come to *perpetuate Judaism* by fulfilling them *all* literally, but to *reveal that Christianity* which existed from all eternity in the mind of God, though for a time, and for wise and merciful purposes, it was necessarily hidden beneath the veil of the sentiments and imagery of an imperfect dispensation. In fact, the Jew must now be reasoned with, exactly as the Apostles of Christ reasoned with him in the earliest days of Christianity; and I do not see why, under God’s blessing, St. Peter’s mode of prophetic interpretation, according to which three thousand Jews were convinced that the crucified Jesus was *really*, though not *literally*, reigning on David’s throne, should not be equally effectual now.

The preacher complains, in a note (p. 23), that while we “summarily dispose” of Restorationist interpretations, “we modestly decline any interpretations of our own.” But this is incorrect; and I am the more surprised to find him making this bold assertion, because in his preface he quotes, with great approbation, a passage from Mr. Davison’s work on prophecy. Now Mr. Davison in that very work, in his chapter on the Old Testament predictions of Christianity, writes at very considerable length on this very point. I give the following specimen:

“As to the documents of prophecy, which announce and describe *the Gospel*, they occupy the prophetic volume from Genesis to Malachi.

“In some measure to open this proof, take the following charac-



minently portrayed. We have comparatively nothing of that deep richness of Jewish colouring, which paints

teristic prediction of Isaiah: 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the *mountain of the Lord's house* shall be *established* in the top of the mountains, and shall be *exalted above* the hills; and *all nations shall flow unto it*. And many people shall go and say: Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of *Zion* shall go forth *the law*, and *the word of the Lord* from Jerusalem. And he shall *judge among* the nations, and shall rebuke many people:' i. e. *instruct* them by reclaiming from error."—Isa. ii. 2, 3.

This passage (as it occurs in Micah iv. 1, 2,) the preacher applies to the *Jews*, ridiculing the idea that "these expressions mean the *Christian Church*."—p. 21.

Now what says Mr. Davison?

"In *all these prophecies* (he quotes other similar ones) the conversion of the Gentiles to a religion proceeding from Judea is *unequivocally* foretold. For that such expressions as *a law, judgment, covenant, light*, in the prophetic volume, are descriptive of some *doctrine, or revelation of a religious nature*, is no more to be doubted than that the phrases of Euclid relate to the subject of geometry. *The law going forth from Zion*, and *the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*, is therefore a *definite and unambiguous* description of a religious doctrine thence communicated to the world. And the flow of all nations to the *mountain of the Lord's house in Zion* is *no less definite* in describing the conversion of the Gentiles to a faith or worship of the true God, originating in that mountain, as the place where it should be first instituted or taught. *Consequently*, these predictions which I have quoted, as well as others of a like tenor, are *prophecies of the Gospel*; for, besides giving some of the appropriate lineaments of the Gospel doctrine, they state the extent and certainty of its propagation amongst the Gentiles; and this its propagation amongst the Gentiles they foretel in as strong and positive a way, as if it had then been an ordinary thing for any set of men to make it their object and business to spread religious opinion of any kind, or for Jews to instruct and convert the other nations of the earth, and that by a religion *above the standard of*

the futurity of the more enthusiastic writers of the Restorationist school of theology. I rejoice at this. It argues *Christian feeling*. I cannot myself, as a student of prophecy, logically hold any portion of the theory of Jewish Restoration, and then refuse logically to advance, with those whom I cannot help regarding as the consistent Restorationists<sup>1</sup>, to those conclusions

*their own.*"—Discourses on Prophecy, by John Davison, B.D., pp. 389—391.

Mr. Davison, at least, when he tells us that the *Jewish expression of nations flowing to the mountain of the Lord's house* is a definite prophecy of *Christianity*, certainly would not "candidly admit the force of what a Jew says, and plead for time;" nor ought he to be complained of as "modestly declining any interpretations of his own."

The Church of Christ owes a deep debt of gratitude to those students of prophecy, who, under God, by their resolute and argumentative Christian opposition to the system of *Jewish* interpretation of the Old Testament, have rescued a large portion of the book of God from that obscurity and practical uselessness into which it was fast falling by the putting on again of that veil which Christ, more than eighteen hundred years ago, gloriously removed. Alas! that we are able in *this* day to say sorrowfully with the Apostle, "Until this day *remaineth* the same veil untaken away in the *reading of the Old Testament*: which veil is *done away in Christ*" (2 Cor. iii. 14).

<sup>1</sup> A short time since, I received a communication from an eminent Restorationist author, in which he informs me that he has published a work (I have not read it), in which he advocates the formation of a society for the purpose of helping the Jews to return to their own land. This, I think, according to Restorationist principles, is quite right. We send the Gospel to Jews and heathen, because we believe that God wishes the Gospel to be preached to them. If, therefore, we believe *also* that it is God's wish that the Jews should be restored to Palestine, I do not see why we ought not, as consistent persons, to subscribe money to effect a restoration of the Jews to Palestine. We have no more right to expect a *miracle* for *Jewish Restoration*, than we have to expect one for the *conversion of either Jews or Gentiles*.

which, however they may be arrived at through the apparent reasoning of undiscovered sophisms, must either blunt or wound the sensibility of true Christian feeling. But why should I not be glad to find that there are many Christian men who are able, even illogically as I think, to save their Christianity? There are at this moment hundreds of excellent clergymen, who, if you ask them whether they believe in the Restoration of the Jews to *their own land*, (as it is called,) will unhesitatingly answer you, "Yes." *But there they stop, and never tell you why*<sup>1</sup>. Happily, as Christians, they are ashamed to walk further in that path which becomes, as it opens out before their steps, more palpable Judaism. *Erubuerunt : salva res est.*

But, however I may rejoice that you have been able, for reasons which satisfy your own mind, to sanction the publication of this modification of the Restorationist theory, which is content to reject *in toto* the system of Mosaic Judaism, still, as I regard the whole argument of the Sermon as built upon a mistake; and, as I further believe that the doctrine of Jewish restoration, even in its most modified and least objectionable form, is directly opposed to the true idea of Apostolic Christianity; I must now ask you to go with me, in all fairness and candour, (and of this I have no doubt,)

<sup>1</sup> I sincerely rejoice to find, by letters from various parts of the country, that my speech has been the humble means of inducing several brother clergymen of the class alluded to to examine more attentively the prophetic subject, and to express to me their opinion that the doctrine of Jewish Restoration does not now appear to them so certainly a scriptural thing as they thought it was.

to an examination of that special argument, which has issued forth with your sanction, and from your pulpit, to do battle with my anti-Restorationist speech.

The argument of the Sermon is the following:—

The preacher commences by a definition of what the Apostle *means* in his text by the covenant made with Abraham. It is, he says, synonymous with the promises made to Abraham. After making this assertion, he searches in the Book of Genesis, and finds that these promises are three: 1. That there should be a nation formed and preserved of Abraham's descendants; 2. That a Saviour for all nations should arise among them; and, 3. That they should have the land of Canaan for their dwelling-place.

He then declares, that all these promises were made to Abraham "*unconditionally*." There is "no hypothesis," he says, "of obedience on the part of Abraham or his descendants securing the fulfilment, or of disobedience forfeiting the fulfilment<sup>3</sup>."

After having thus shown, to his satisfaction, that the Abrahamic covenant of his text was the same thing as the Abrahamic promises in the Book of Genesis, that the promises were three, and that the three promises were *unconditional*: he proceeds to describe the giving of the law four hundred and thirty years after, laying great stress upon the fact, as he asserts it to be, that, whereas all the Abrahamic promises were *unconditional*, all the Mosaic promises were *conditional*<sup>4</sup>. He then declares his strong con-

<sup>3</sup> See p. 9 of Sermon.

<sup>4</sup> If, as the preacher says, every thing in Mosaicism was con-

viction, that Mosaic Judaism is abolished and utterly abrogated.

He then returns to the Abrahamic covenant; that is, according to his own definition of the covenant, to the three Abrahamic promises: and argues, that, if one part of the covenant be abrogated, the whole of it must be abrogated. But, he says, that part of it which had reference to the Messiah still remains: therefore, he concludes, that part of it which had reference to the land still remains<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, according to the unconditional Abrahamic covenant, the Jews will certainly be nationally restored to the land of Palestine.

This I think, both the preacher and yourself will

*ditional*, and if every thing in it was *failure*, what has become of the *Mosaic promise* of the Messiah?—See Deut. xviii. 18.

<sup>5</sup> I do not understand what the preacher means by saying that “the Jews are *preserved* to this day as a distinct *nation*, according to Abrahamic promise.” Surely it is a misnomer to call the Jews *a nation*. If the Restorationists be right, they are *to become a nation*; but certainly they are not *a nation* now. I have not noticed this in the text, because the question is not of any consequence in the argument. But it always seems to me very strange language to hear it said that God, since the coming of Christ, is *preserving the Jews as a separate nation*. You might as well talk of God’s *preserving the heathen in their heathenism*, or the *Mahometans in their Mahometanism*. For is not a continuance in Judaism a rejection of Christ? And can it be scriptural to say, now that the Messiah has come, and invites all men to enter that Church *where there is neither Jew nor Greek*, that God is graciously *preserving* for future glories in Palestine those who reject the Saviour? Surely it can never be right to say that God *preserves men in a state of sin*. If the Jews were to obey God, they would at once cease to be Jews, and so there would be no Jews to be restored; and what would then become of the Restorationist view of prophecy?



allow to be a perfectly fair description of the argument of the Restorationist Sermon<sup>6</sup>. Let us now carefully examine it.

In the first place, observe the marvellous inconsistency of the preacher in his mode of reasoning upon the Apostolic use of the words "promise" and "promises."

Read his text:—

"And this I say, that *the covenant*, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make *the promise* of none effect'."

Now, surely, if any argumentative stress is to be laid upon St. Paul's use, in this Epistle, of the *singular* or *plural* form of the word "promise," it is most natural and most correct to say,—that the Apostle here uses "the covenant" and "the promise" as synonymous terms, and not, as the preacher asserts, "the covenant" and "the promises."

But just mark, as I said, his inconsistency.

He first argues, from the *plural* form of the word in the *sixteenth* verse, that the covenant of which the Apostle is writing must mean *all the Abrahamic promises of the book of Genesis*. He then argues, from the *singular* form of the word in the *twenty-ninth*

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 7—17 of the Sermon.

<sup>7</sup> I give the text in the original Greek, both for the satisfaction of some readers, and because I shall have occasion to refer to one of its expressions. Τοῦτο δὲ λέγω· διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰς Χριστὸν, ὃ μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονώς νόμος οὐκ ἀκυροῖ, εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν (Gal. iii. 17).

verse, that the Apostle there means *only one of the same Abrahamic promises*<sup>8</sup>. And then, marvellous to relate, almost in the same breath, he interprets the *singular* form of the word in his own text (which, you will observe, is the only verse of the whole Epistle in which the words "covenant" and "promise" occur together) to mean *exactly the same as the plural form*; that is, *all the Abrahamic promises*. Surely this will never do. If, as the preacher would have us believe, St. Paul really meant, in this Epistle, the plural "promises" to be more inclusive than the singular "promise," at least, we must have fair play in this verbal argument. Whatever we may privately think, either of the solidity or of the ingenuity of this style of reasoning<sup>9</sup>, still, if attacked by such weapons, we must, in mere self-defence, remember that they may

<sup>8</sup> The preacher says, with reference to the twenty-ninth verse, that "the Apostle was writing to Gentiles." But he was writing to Jews (or rather to those who had been Jews) also; for, in addition to the fact that his Epistle was caused by the knowledge of the Jewish element which Judaizing Christian teachers were spreading in the Church (whom, as it is evident, he addresses along with the rest), he writes to them, in the third chapter, as consisting of one body in which there was *then* "neither Jew nor Greek."

<sup>9</sup> It is so common a thing for the Apostles to use the words "promise" and "promises" *indiscriminately*, with reference to the Gospel and its strictly *Christian* blessings, that I marvel that, in a *concio ad clerum*, the preacher should have ventured to bring forward his verbal argument, even had he been able to preserve its consistency in the chapter from which his text is taken. See, for the Apostolic use of the word in the plural number, 2 Cor. i. 20, and vii. 1; Heb. viii. 6, where *our* Christian covenant is described as "established upon better *promises*," 2 Pet. i. 4, where the Gospel is said to consist of *μέγιστα καὶ τίμα ἐπαγγέλματα*.

be used on our own side also, and that, if *all that God promised to Abraham* must be included in "the promise" of the text, Palestine must be the dwelling-place of *us all*: because, if we be Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to "the promise."

But, passing on from this mode of reasoning, which, even if consistent, is often not very convincing; and which, of course, when inconsistent, falls at once to the ground, let us look into the matter a little more closely.

If we are obliged to understand St. Paul as speaking, in the text, of the Abrahamic covenant *as a whole*, and are therefore bound to go with the preacher into the book of Genesis, and bring out with him *all* the Abrahamic promises, it is perfectly clear that we must bring out something more. In our search after the component parts of the *whole Abrahamic covenant*, we cannot stop just where he would have us stop. If the Apostle is really treating of *the whole covenant* which God made with Abraham, as it is given in the sacred records, then the preacher's extracted description of it is an exceedingly imperfect one. Let us also consult the book of Genesis, and see whether we cannot find in it a fuller account of the Abrahamic covenant, *in all its parts*, by which we may be able to fill up and complete that which has been only partially set before us by the preacher.

In the seventeenth chapter, the sacred historian gives us the following statements respecting it, *in addition to those passages respecting its promises, which are quoted in the Sermon.*

“And God said unto Abraham, . . . This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. . . . And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant<sup>1</sup>.”

With this *additional* information before us, we can now give a more correct definition of *the whole Abrahamic covenant*, as it is described in the ancient history of the Patriarch. It consists, we see, if it be regarded in its entire substance<sup>2</sup>, of promises, (three, if you please, though some subdivide more minutely still<sup>3</sup>), and the indispensable rite of circumcision. On the preacher's supposition, therefore, that the Apostle meant, in the text, *the whole Abrahamic covenant*, he meant also the rite of circumcision, which was, as we have seen, so important and necessary a portion of that covenant, that the uncircumcised were to be cut off<sup>4</sup>.

And now, let me ask, what becomes of the preacher's argument, that, inasmuch as one part of the whole Abrahamic covenant remains, every part must remain

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvii. 9—14.

<sup>2</sup> I have said nothing here respecting Abrahamic *sacrifices*; but, if Abrahamic Judaism, so to speak, is to be restored *as a whole*, its sacrifices must also come back with it.

<sup>3</sup> Macknight, for example, divides the whole Abrahamic covenant into “*six* separate promises or stipulations on the part of God.”—See his Commentary on the Apostolical Epistles, p. 289.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen calls the Abrahamic covenant emphatically “the covenant of circumcision” (Acts vii. 8).

also? If that argument be a true one, St. Paul must necessarily contradict himself. According to the preacher, he is made to declare in his text, that the whole Abrahamic covenant is yet standing; or, in other words, that circumcision is still a binding ordinance in Christianity. But in this very epistle he asserts, in the most emphatic language, that Jewish circumcision "availeth nothing"; while, in his other writings, he most distinctly and consistently declares, that the only circumcision which Christ acknowledges, is that which is "without hands"; "that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God'."

But it is also asserted, (and this is one of the most

<sup>a</sup> Gal. vi. 15. Some Restorationists, I understand, have gone so far as to assert that circumcision *does* yet avail something, and have recommended converted Jews not only to baptize, but also to circumcise, their children, lest they should lose *the land*.

<sup>a</sup> ἀχειροποιήτω. See Col. ii. 10—15. The whole passage is an important one, as giving St. Paul's view of "Christian circumcision." "We (he says to the Philippians) are *the circumcision*" (Phil. iii. 3).

<sup>i</sup> Rom. ii. 28, 29. A work on Prophecy by Dr. Lee, the late learned Professor of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge, has just fallen into my hands. I have only read a part of it; but I am glad to find, from what I have read, that he considers the doctrine of the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine as repugnant to the word of God as I do. "These things (he says) of the *temporary covenant* can now be remembered no more. *Canaan* has lost its privilege of *exclusiveness*. We can have now, in *genuine scriptural usage*, no *Jews*, and no *Canaan*. If there is to be a return to *Canaan*, when can this possibly take place? and where are we to find *the Jews* who shall undertake it? And, again, where is the *Canaan* to which they are to return? The *Christian covenant* knows of *no such people*, and of *no such place*."—An Inquiry into the Nature, Progress, and End of Prophecy, by S. Lee, D.D., pp. 98, 99.



astounding assertions in the whole Sermon,) that *all the promises to Abraham were unconditional*; or, in other words, that *the whole Abrahamic covenant*, of which the Apostle is supposed to be writing, was made with the Patriarch *without any conditions*, either expressed or implied. Let us test the accuracy of this assertion by the following plain extracts from the Patriarch's history:—

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation. . . . So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him*<sup>8</sup>.”

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect. . . . And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly*<sup>9</sup>.”

“Thou shalt *keep* my covenant, thou and thy seed after thee. The uncircumcised man child . . . that soul shall be *cut off* from his people; he hath *broken* my covenant<sup>1</sup>.”

“And it came to pass after these things that God did *tempt* Abraham. . . . And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as

<sup>8</sup> Gen. xii. 1—4.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. xvii. 1, 2.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvii. 9. 14.

the stars of heaven . . . . *because* thou hast obeyed my voice<sup>2</sup>.”

“The Lord appeared unto Isaac, and said . . . Sojourn in this land, *and* I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries; . . . *because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*<sup>3</sup>.”

Quotations of this sort might easily be multiplied, but it is needless. It is extraordinary that one of them was given to you by the preacher himself<sup>4</sup>, without perceiving that it disproved his own assertion. But no one, I think, can now even glance at them, without at once seeing, that the statement that *all* the Abrahamic promises were *unconditional*, is the very reverse of the scriptural fact. Surely, when we contemplate the commands to go into Canaan, and there walk perfectly before God, with the promise of blessings annexed to their fulfilment; the law which enjoined circumcision, with the attached threat of “cutting off,” if it were not complied with; the painful trial of a father’s obedience, with the accompanying angelic declaration of the Lord’s satisfaction with its result;—surely, I say, when we contemplate all this, (summed up, as it afterwards was, to Isaac, as *the charge, the commandments, the statutes, and the laws*, which God gave to his father, and which his father kept,) we cannot cease to wonder, both at the preacher for making the statement, and

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxii. 1. 15—18.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxvi. 2—5.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. xvii. 1. See p. 8 of the Sermon.

yourself for receiving it and sanctioning it, that *all the Abrahamic promises were absolute and unconditional.*

Here, then, for a moment, let us pause. I asked you to examine with me the preacher's argument in his Restorationist Sermon. We have now done so; and what is the result? Clearly this:—

1. His attempt to show, by verbal criticism, that St. Paul meant by the word "covenant," in his text, *the whole Abrahamic covenant*, is utterly inconsistent with itself.

2. In describing that covenant from the book of Genesis, he omitted to mention an essential part of it,—the rite of circumcision. Our completion of that description, and the Apostle's distinct declaration, that the rite of circumcision is not binding in Christianity, overthrow his argument, that, if *one* part of the Abrahamic covenant is gone, *all* must be gone.

3. His assertion, that *all* the Abrahamic promises were *unconditional*, is contradicted by the plain testimony of Scripture.

In other words, he has completely failed in his effort to bring forward the great Christian Apostle as a witness in favour of the Jewish notion of a National Restoration to Palestine.

But how was it that he could preach, and you could ask him to publish, all this inconsistency and inconclusiveness? The main reason was, that he began with a mistake, and you did not detect it. But it must now, I think, be clear to you, that, in attempting to deduce from St. Paul's impracticable *Christian* words, the doctrine of the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine, he

utterly failed in his argument, principally because he completely *misunderstood* what the Apostle *meant*, when he used the word "covenant" in his text. That original mistake ruined all his subsequent attempts to reason. The fact is, that he tried to build up a Jewish superstructure on what we shall presently see to have been a Christian foundation, supposing it to be a Jewish one; and we cannot, of course, wonder at the result.

The question, then, now before us, is simply this: *What did St. Paul mean when he used the word "covenant" in the preacher's text?*

1. As it is abundantly evident, from what has been said, that the Apostle did *not mean* the *whole* Abrahamic covenant, he *must have meant* only a *part* of it. The question, therefore, immediately assumes this form, *What part of it did he mean?*

2. If we examine the text itself, we find that the two words "covenant" and "promise" are used as strictly synonymous. We must, therefore, consult the context of the chapter to discover *what* is the exact "promise" of which the Apostle was then thinking.

3. This promise we find at once in the earlier part of the chapter. The Apostle having, in the sixth verse, commenced his allusion to the Patriarch's history, gives us, in the eighth verse, *the exact promise* of which we are now in search. "The Scripture," he says, "preached before *the Gospel* unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed<sup>5</sup>." This is evidently "the promise," or, in other words, "the

<sup>5</sup> Gal. iii. 8.

covenant," of which St. Paul wrote in the preacher's text.

Again, in the fourteenth verse, he makes mention of it as "the blessing of Abraham," and calls it by a very accurate Christian definition, "the promise of the Spirit<sup>6</sup>."

Again, in the sixteenth verse, speaking of it as given to Abraham and his seed, which is Christ, he calls it, in the plural form, "the promises:" not because, according to the preacher's most extraordinary mode of interpretation, he wished to include the land of Palestine, but because, as it is plain from the twenty-first verse, he was referring to *such strictly Christian promises* as "life" and "righteousness," which he there clearly uses as synonymous with the word in its plural form.

Again, in the eighteenth verse, he describes it as *the inheritance given to Abraham by promise*.

And lastly; in the twenty-ninth verse, (where, you will observe, the Apostle is addressing *both Jews and Gentiles*, and not, as the preacher supposes, *Gentiles only*,) this same promise, or, in other words, this same covenant, is declared to belong to all Christians, because, by virtue of their union with Christ, they are the true seed of Abraham.

Thus, then, there is not a shadow of difficulty, (if we only allow the Apostle to speak for himself,) in determining *what he meant*, when he used the word *covenant* in the preacher's text. As it was clear, that he could not mean the *whole* Abrahamic covenant, and

<sup>6</sup> The Apostle speaks of "the ministration of the Spirit" in 2 Cor. iii. 8.



could therefore only mean a *part* of it: so is it now clear, from his own explanation, that the part of it which he did mean was *the Christian part of it*. He meant, in short, the grand Christian promise of justification by faith in Christ, which includes all other Christian promises, and which is theirs, and theirs only, and equally theirs, whether they may have been Jews or Gentiles, who follow the footsteps of faithful Abraham.

But if, leaving the immediate context, we pass on to the next chapter of the Epistle, we shall there find a remarkable passage, which proves, beyond all controversy, that what the Apostle meant by "covenant" in the text, was, as has been shown, that part of the whole Abrahamic covenant which was strictly and properly Christian.

Let me request you to read the whole passage.

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear *the law*? For it is written, that Abraham had *two sons*, the one by a *bondmaid*, the other by a *freewoman*. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for *these are the two covenants*; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all'."

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 21—26. Read also 27—31; and observe how the Apostle quotes a passage from the prophecies of Isaiah (liv. 1), as

Now, it seems to me incredible, that, if St. Paul had intended to distinguish, as the preacher tries to do, between the Abrahamic covenant *as a whole*, and the Mosaic covenant *as a whole*, he would *ever* have drawn his allegory from *the history of the Patriarch*. Nor, certainly, with such a distinction in his mind, would he ever have called that history "*the law*." But he evidently had in his mind a very clear distinction, though not such an one as the preacher has supposed. He plainly teaches us, that, *in the record of God's dealings with Abraham* we are to look for *two covenants*,—the covenant of works, and the covenant of promise: his bond wife Hagar allegorically representing the one, and his free wife Sarah allegorically representing the other. The *whole* Abrahamic covenant, therefore, which, as we have already seen, *must* be divided into two parts, *is* here divided for us by St. Paul himself. In fact, he separates it into *two distinct Abrahamic covenants*, the *one strictly Jewish*, and the *other strictly Christian*; the former of which he identifies with that which afterwards became the Sinaitic or Mosaic, and the latter with that which was afterwards called the new covenant of Christianity: all the blessings of which are equally enjoyed by all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, who believe in Christ Jesus.

We may now, I think, see clearly, in the light of the inspired Christian explanation of the Apostle himself, what he meant, when he wrote of a covenant which the law could not disannul. Taught of God to strictly applicable to the *Christian Church*. He never could have done this, had he been a Restorationist.

*distinguish things which differ*, he was able to discern the true Christian element, so to speak, which was hidden in Judaism, whether Abrahamic or Mosaic, till Christ came, and solved *the mystery*<sup>\*</sup> of ages and generations. This Christian element, this Christian part of the whole Abrahamic covenant, or, (as St. Paul authorizes us to say,) this *Christian Abrahamic covenant*, concealed, as it long was, in the pregnant promise, that *in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*, is that covenant of which the Apostle speaks, and only speaks, in the words of the preacher's text. This covenant, he says, was confirmed before of God with reference to Christ<sup>9</sup>. Having respect to the

\* There are few scriptural words so misunderstood as the word "mystery," as applied to the Gospel of Christ. Many persons suppose, as they read it, that it means that the Gospel is a *mysterious* thing now. But the very reverse is the truth. The Gospel *was* "a mystery" while it was concealed in Judaism, whether Abrahamic or Mosaic; but is now *plainly revealed*. It is not "a mystery" now. See Eph. iii. 1—7, where the Apostle speaks of the *plain revelation* of God's gracious intention that Jews and Gentiles should be "*fellow-heirs, and of the same body*." This *perfect equality* in privileges of Jews and Gentiles *was* "a mystery," but is not one now. But if, according to the argument of the preacher's Sermon, the Gentiles are only to have *one* Abrahamic promise, while the Jews are to have *all the three* promises, then the *fellow-heirship* of the Gentiles remains a "mystery" yet, and there *is* a difference between Jew and Greek.

<sup>9</sup> εἰς Χριστόν. I have already given the whole text in the original Greek. The words εἰς Χριστόν are marked by Griesbach as *probably* an interpolation. Mill, who supposes them to have been an annotation, says with reference to them, "Et quidem simplicior sermo absque illo εἰς Χριστόν . . . Pactum firmatum in Christo, *seu spectasse Christum*, id vero commate præcedenti dixerat, neque repetito opus est." Our translation, "in Christ," scarcely conveys the Apostle's meaning; and I have therefore rendered the words

whole world, by the comprehensiveness of its blessed promise, it could not, of course, be affected, in the slightest degree, by any temporary legal arrangements which it might please God to make for the Jewish nation. But the Judaizing teachers (against whom the Apostle was writing) were instructing the Galatians, that the Christianity which God intended for the world ought to be subjected to the *Jewish national covenant*. Against this disannulling of the Gospel the inspired Apostle most earnestly protests. He very conclusively reminds them, that a *national Jewish law*, given, as it was, four hundred and thirty years after the original Christian promise, could not, in the very nature of things, make that promise of none effect. This was an argument which could not be refuted. It checked, we cannot doubt, in some measure, the corruption of Jewish influence in those early and dangerous days of Christianity: and there it stands, on the sacred page of the great Christian Apostle, as true and fresh as ever. Alas! that we should need it now!

And now, reverend and dear Sir, having extricated the Apostle's true meaning from the confusion in which the Restorationist preacher's original mistake has involved it, we are prepared to enquire into the scriptural history of *that other part of the Abrahamic covenant*, or, as St. Paul would say, *that other Abrahamic covenant*, of which the Apostle was *not* writing in the preacher's misapprehended text.

Our enquiry into the history of this covenant will more exactly "with reference to Christ." Calvin says, in one place, "In Christ, or to Christ;" and, in another place, "In Christ, or in reference to Christ."—Calvin's Commentary on the Epistle.

not occupy us long. But let us first, for the sake of clearness, define it. And this, of course, is a very easy task: for we have nothing to do but to subtract from the whole Abrahamic covenant that Christian part of it, of which the Apostle wrote, and we shall then have clearly before us that other part of it, of which we are now in search. In other words, we shall, by this simple process, discover the *national covenant, which God made with Abraham, as the father of the Jewish nation*, as distinguished from the *Christian covenant, which God made with Abraham, as the father of the Christian Church of all nations*. Its tale is soon told. Made originally with Abraham, as the ancestor of the future nation, this national covenant of circumcision was never intended by God to come into operation, *with respect to the possession of the land of Canaan*, in the Patriarch's lifetime. On the contrary, God specially informed him, in the deep sleep which fell upon him after the appointed sacrifice, that, so far from being himself the possessor of it, he would go to his fathers in peace, and be buried in a good old age, *long before* the accomplishment of God's promise to him respecting *the land*<sup>1</sup>. This national covenant was successively ratified with Isaac and Jacob, his son and grandson; the former of whom, as we have already seen, was distinctly reminded, that, so far from being *unconditional*, it had, *as truly* as it ever had after the time of Moses, *its commandments, its statutes, and its laws*<sup>2</sup>. Afterwards, when Abraham's seed had grown into a

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xv. 12—21.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxvi. 5.



nation, and the time of the promise of *the land* drew near<sup>3</sup>, these commandments, statutes, and laws, which, whatever had been their exact form, had, of course, only been prepared for the direction of families, assumed under Moses a *national* form, and were called in their completeness "the law." This being done, the same national covenant, with the same distinguishing rite of circumcision, and with laws adapted to the commencing nationality of Abraham's descendants, was solemnly confirmed with those descendants at the base of Sinai<sup>4</sup>. I need

<sup>3</sup> Acts vii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> I subjoin here an extract from the speech which I lately delivered in Liverpool, containing the argument to which it is the special object of the preacher to reply :

"My Lord, the Missionary of the New Testament cannot encourage the Jewish expectation of a National Restoration to Palestine ; *because* the New Testament asserts that God's National Covenant with the Jews has vanished away. I look to its past history. I find that it was originally made between God and Abraham, as the father of the Jewish nation. It was successively confirmed by him with Isaac and with Jacob. It was solemnly ratified at the base of Sinai, when Moses sprinkled with blood the book of the Covenant and the people of the Covenant. It was again ratified, before Moses' death, on the wide plains of Moab, with the promised land in view. It was then graciously enlarged, so as to be called the Covenant. besides the Covenant. Again, under Joshua, it was ratified, with awful sanctions, between Ebal and Gerizim, the mounts of cursing and blessing. Again, after the victories and triumphs of David, it was ratified in Jerusalem, when Solomon had built a temple for Jehovah. Again, after a dark period of idolatry and apostasy, it was ratified under Josiah, when the lost Covenant-book was found, and its words of joy and fear were read by the monarch in the ears of the repentant people. Then came the deserved days of captivity and punishment, under Babylonish tyranny. But the Covenant had not yet vanished away ; for the times of the Messiah had not yet arrived, and no new and superseding kingdom of God had yet been

not detain you by pursuing its history further. You know, and the preacher knows, the conclusion of its annals: for you both acknowledge that Mosaic Judaism (which, as you will now, I 'think, acknowledge, was only *Abrahamic Judaism nationalized*) is "done away," "taken away," and "vanished away" for ever.

set up in the world; and so, when the limited period of captivity had passed, again, and for the last time, was the Covenant ratified, when Ezra read the Lord's book from his pulpit, and the returned children of Israel entered once more into an oath and into a curse, that they would faithfully observe Jehovah's commandments.

"But, my Lord, the Christian Missionary, having so far traced the history of the Jewish Covenant in those sacred records, is obliged, by the plain declarations of the New Testament, to assert that the first Covenant is now no longer in existence, and cannot, therefore, be appealed to by the Jew. For what says the New Testament of the Jewish covenant? 'If that, which was done away, was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.' And, again, 'He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.' And, again, 'In that he saith, "a new covenant," he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.'

"My Lord, the Missionary of Christianity, with these words of inspiration in his memory, must not, I think, encourage the Jew in his expectation of a National Restoration, inasmuch as that National Covenant, by which alone the Restoration can be claimed, is now 'done away,' 'taken away,' and 'vanished away' for ever."

The preacher, after quoting the commencement of this argument, remarks that "it is gratuitously inconsistent, first to *identify the Abrahamic covenant with the Mosaic*; then to declare the Mosaic done away; and then to plead for a part, for any part, of the Abrahamic as not done away." If I had ever done what the preacher told you I did, the rebuke would have been well deserved. But *I never did identify the Christian part of the Abrahamic covenant with abolished Mosaicism*. What I did, and what I do, identify with the Mosaicism, which is gone, is the Abrahamic *national* covenant. The preacher has first misrepresented what I said, and has then contended against his own misrepresentation.

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And here I might fairly conclude the task which you have imposed upon me; for I have now shown you, that the first argument of my Speech against Jewish National Restoration to Palestine, remains absolutely untouched by the statements of the Sermon, and is, therefore, as fatal as before to all Jewish expectations of future national glory. But I observe, in the conclusion of the discourse, an attempt to weaken the force of another of my anti-Restorationist arguments, which was derived from the positive declarations of God himself, that, however he might prophesy either national evil, or national good, he still retained in his own hands the power of *repenting*, (to use his own divine expression,) of either the evil or the good, which by his prophets he had predicted<sup>5</sup>. Against this

<sup>5</sup> The argument, as stated in my Speech, was the following :

“But, supposing that these stern *chronological* difficulties could be got over, there would still remain, as I respectfully submit, an unanswerable objection to Jewish Restoration, derived from the very *nature* of Old Testament prophecy, when that prophecy has reference to the destinies of nations. This objection arises from the fact, that, according to the explicit declarations of God himself, his national prophecies were never intended to be unconditional, and, therefore, were never to be considered as fated to be literally accomplished. I learn this from the positive assertion in the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah's prophecies, where Jehovah declares, in the clearest language, that, however he may prophesy either national evil or national good, he retains in his own hands the power of repenting (to use his own divine expression) of either the evil or the good, which, by his prophets, he had predicted. And, in perfect consistency with this sacred canon, I find in the Old Testament Scriptures a variety of prophecies which never have been, and, in the very nature of things, never can be accomplished. I find Nathan, the prophet, predicting to David *that Israel should never move from the land of Palestine* : but I know that they *were* removed;

argument, which, indeed, if founded on God's word, is fatal to any expectation of Jewish Restoration which may be built upon ancient prophecies respecting Palestine, the preacher launches forth his most indignant oratory. "We," he told you, "cannot dismiss it," a national prophecy, "with the notion, that God has retained in his own hands the power of repenting of it, so that possibly it may never be fulfilled at all. We cannot so treat the word of God. The Bible, so

and I know also, that the removal was afterwards accounted for by an explicit assertion, that God's prophecy was *not unconditional*. I find Micah, the prophet, predicting, as a punishment to the rebellious Jews of his day, *that their city should become heaps* : but I find also, in Jeremiah the prophet, that that very prophecy of Micah, the Morasthite, is quoted word for word, only to show that God had *repented* of it, and had *not* fulfilled it. I find the same prophet, Jeremiah, prophesying that the Jews who returned from Babylon, *should also turn to God with their whole heart, and should never be plucked up from Palestine* ; but yet I know, from Ezra and Nehemiah, that they were *not* all true servants of Jehovah ; and I have no reason to doubt that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is a credible *fact* of past history. I find Jonah, the prophet, prophesying (and it is his only prediction) *that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days* ; and yet the appointed time passed by, and spared Nineveh remained an instructive witness to God's gracious *repentance* of prophesied destruction. Ought, then, the Jew, with this principle of prophetic interpretation in his memory, to *expect* the temporal restoration of his nation ? Certainly not. National prophecy was evidently intended by God for national encouragement and national warning. The Jewish nation, according to their own records, neglected the encouragement, and despised the warning ; and, unless it can be proved, that the sole object of God's prophecies was to foretel future events, which were fatally to come true, irrespectively of all conditions and circumstances, the Jews have no right to expect such a fulfilment of them as is not at all required by God's own canon of prophetic interpretation."

viewed, would cease to command, or, as I think, to deserve, our confidence. But 'in God we praise his word; in the Lord we praise his word: in God have we put our trust<sup>6</sup>.'

Now all this, as far as argument is concerned, is, of course, absolutely nothing. It is mere declamation; and I should not notice it, were it not that I wish to offer, both to the preacher and yourself, an earnest suggestion, whether it is not a sort of declamation, which, as Christian men, we ought to strive to avoid. For, without containing within it any element of conviction, it addresses itself solely to the prejudices of the hearers, and has the twofold effect of establishing them in those prepossessions, which *may* be utterly erroneous; and also of inducing them to consider all those who, after a patient investigation of God's word, have come to directly opposite conclusions, as nothing better than unbelievers. Let me assure you both, as my only answer to this declamation, that those Christian men who think, with me, that God both can and does *repent* of national prophecy, do really, however strange it may seem, "believe God," and are certain, that "what he has spoken (*as assuredly to come to pass*) will assuredly come to pass."

With this simple answer, then, which is necessary for our self-justification, let me request you seriously and calmly to examine with me the Holy Scriptures on this point of God's *repentance* of his national predictions, and then say whether it is not a true doctrine of revelation.

<sup>6</sup> See p. 22 of the Sermon.



In the first chapter of the book of Jeremiah's prophecies, the prophet informs us, that he was appointed to his office in the following manner:—

“Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put *my words* in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the *nations* and over the *kingdoms*, to *root out*, and to *pull down*, and to *destroy*, and to *throw down*, to *build*, and to *plant*’.”

I have quoted this passage on account of the phraseology in which *national prophesying* is expressed. Jeremiah, as he tells us in the fifth verse, was ordained by God to be a *prophet to the nations*<sup>7</sup>. You will remark, then, that to prophesy evil against a nation is synonymous with *rooting it out, pulling it down, destroying it, and throwing it down*; and that to prophesy good to a nation, is the same thing as to *build it, and to plant it*.

Such being the sacred description of Jeremiah's prophetic duties, let us now examine, in the eighteenth chapter of the same book, *the canon of interpretation* which God has himself given us for the right understanding of his prophecies concerning nations. I quote the whole passage:—

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a *nation*, and concerning a *kingdom*, to *pluck up*, and to *pull down*, and to *destroy it*; if that *nation*, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will *repent* of the evil that I *thought* to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a *nation*, and concern-

<sup>7</sup> Jer. i. 9, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Jer. i. 5.

ing a *kingdom*, to *build* and to *plant it*; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will *repent* of the good, wherewith I *said* I would benefit them<sup>9</sup>."

Now, am I right, or am I wrong, in asserting, as I do, that God has, in these words, plainly declared, that he *does retain, in his own hands, the power of repenting of his predictions concerning nations, whether of good or of evil?*

Were we inclined to declaim, how easy, but how very unargumentative, it would be to say: We cannot dismiss this positive declaration of God with the notion that he has not retained in his own hands the power of repenting of his national prophecies. We cannot so treat the word of God. No: we believe God; and, as he has positively declared to us, that, under certain circumstances, he *will* repent of predicted good and evil, we know that it *must* be so. "In God we praise his word: in the Lord we praise his word."

But let us proceed. In my Speech I not only adduced the *canon*, but I brought forward, from the sacred history of prophecy, several of the plainest scriptural *instances*, in which God *had* acted towards *nations* according to his own declared rules. One of them, I see, has received special notice in the Sermon; and it is to the manner in which the preacher seeks to elude its force that I must now call your attention.

The *prophecy*, which I quoted in a condensed form, from the book of Micah, is in full as follows:—

"Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of

<sup>9</sup> Jer. xviii. 7—10.

Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion *for your sake* be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest<sup>1</sup>."

So *prophesied* Micah, the Lord's prophet: and the question now before us is simply this: Did God *repent* of his prophecy, or did he not? The preacher says, that to assert that he did is "rashly to charge God with a false prophecy." But I appeal from this hasty decision to the plain testimony of God's word. I quote two passages, which bear directly on the point in question, from the twenty-sixth chapter of the book of Jeremiah, which, as you know, relates events which took place about a hundred years after the utterance of Micah's prediction.

In the first place, we find, in the twelfth and thirteenth verses, Jeremiah himself clearly declaring to the assembled princes and people *the doctrine of God's repentance of prophecy*.

"Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to *prophecy* against this house, and against this city, all the words that ye have heard. *Therefore* now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord

<sup>1</sup> Micah iii. 9—12.



your God; and the Lord will *repent* him of the evil that he hath *pronounced* against you."

In exact accordance with these words of Jeremiah, we find an account, in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth verses of the same chapter, of God's *repentance of Micah's prophecy*.

"Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite *prophesied* in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; *Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest*. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord *repented* him of the evil which he had *pronounced* against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls."

Now, what says the preacher to all this? "It is true, indeed, that this was not fulfilled *immediately*." But, let me ask you in all seriousness: Is *repentance*, in Scripture, synonymous with *delay*? When you say, that you *repent* of your sins, do you mean, that you are merely *delaying* to commit them, and that you intend to commit them at a more convenient season? Surely, this style of interpretation will never do. If God condescends to instruct us as to his dealings with us, by the use of human language (and we cannot conceive how he could instruct us in any other manner), it is plainly our duty to understand that

<sup>1</sup> See p. 20 of the Sermon.

language in its usual sense. To do otherwise would be to make the whole interpretation of Scripture a thing of mere fancy, and to unsettle its very foundations. God distinctly declares to me, in words which he knows that I practically understand, that *he repents of national prophecy*. I read the Scripture, and I find, that he *has repented of national prophecy*. I cannot explain it away to save a human system.

And to say, as the preacher says, that God, hundreds of years afterwards, inflicted punishments upon the Jewish nation by the instrumentality of the Roman armies, is simply to say nothing to the purpose. The statement is quite true: but it is also quite beside the mark. God's declared repentance of prophesied evil, and God's subsequent punishment of a rebellious nation for subsequent crimes, cannot possibly interfere the one with the other. The case is simply this: Seven hundred years before Christ's advent, the Jews offended God. God, by his prophet, pronounced against them a prophecy of evil. This prophecy produced that blessed effect which it is the merciful intention of all God's prophecies of evil to produce. It caused *repentance*. God *repented* of his prophecy of evil. Seventy years after Christ's advent, when the Jews had rejected and crucified him, who, *with a full knowledge of all his Father's prophecies*, would have gathered them all under his wings, God executed, by the Roman armies, his righteous vengeance against his Son's murderers. But, certainly, there is nothing in all this, either to disprove the fact that he *did repent* of his prophecy of evil in *the days of Hezekiah*, or to

show that he could not, in the most harmonious accordance with that fact, inflict *afterwards* a just punishment upon those who had despised the goodness of his repentance, even in its highest manifestation.

And now I leave these remarks to the calm and candid consideration of yourself, the preacher, and all who may read these pages. Judge, all of you, for yourselves, whether I have not clearly proved, that, to *distinguish*, as in the Sermon, the *Abrahamic* covenant, *as a whole*, from the *Mosaic* covenant, *as a whole*, is simply to make A DISTINCTION WITHOUT A DIFFERENCE: and that the TRUE DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE is to divide, as St. Paul has done, the whole Abrahamic covenant into two covenants,—the *Jewish National*, and the *Christian Catholic*: the former, with its land, its laws, its circumcision, its exclusiveness, its sacrifices, and its countless ceremonies, to flow onward down the stream of Judaism, and then, all to be done away in Christ; the latter, veiled for a time in Jewish mystery, to be revealed at last in the majesty and glory of that new Christian covenant, under which “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all<sup>3</sup>.”

Judge, also, whether it be a *warrantable* construction to put upon God’s merciful words, when, in his gracious condescension, he addresses us in *human language*, in order that we may *understand* his goodness, to say, that, when he assures us that, if we repent, he will *repent*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> If God’s *repentance* may be explained away, then, by the same

of the punishment, which, for our sins, he had prophesied against us, he only *means*, that that punishment is *deferred*.

Let me say to you in conclusion, that I am sure that you will not agree with some of my friends, who have suggested to me that the doctrine of the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine, whether scriptural or unscriptural, is, after all, scarcely worth the painful attention of a Christian man. On the contrary, you will think with me, that the subject is, for many reasons, one of very great importance. I will only now mention one of my own reasons.

The greatest and the most difficult business of our lives, as clergymen, is to interpret and apply the Scriptures, both in our public and in our private ministrations;

rule, God's *love* and God's *hatred* may be explained away; for, as our First Article says, "God is without passions." God speaks to us *anthropopathically*, indeed; for otherwise he could not speak to us at all, but not the less *truly* and *really*.

The unscriptural denial of God's power to *repent of prophecies of evil* is the source of infinite mischief in the Church of Christ, by leading Christian men to utter, on public platforms and elsewhere, the most fearful denunciations against opposing systems of religion. For instance, they first identify Papal Rome with Pagan Babylon, and then launch forth against the former all the terrible predictions which God, in ancient times, spake by his prophets against the latter. This application is, I think, in itself incorrect. But let that pass. But, *supposing* the prophecies to be rightly directed against Papal Rome, why should she not be told, that, if she will repent of her false doctrines and false practices, God will repent also? To tell Babylon that there is "no hope," and that she "must be destroyed," is surely not the most likely, and certainly not the most scriptural way, to convert her from her rebellion. *Lasciate ogni speranza voi che' ntrate* ought never to be inscribed over any earthly portal.

especially in the former. Now the Scriptures, as we know, consist of two distinct parts, the Old and New Testaments. It follows, therefore, that, as we have to instruct our congregations from the whole word of God, it is a matter of immense importance rightly to understand the relations which these Testaments bear the one to the other. To say that the whole Bible is inspired, and that therefore we have nothing to do but to discover the meaning of any scriptural passage, and then apply it at once to the consciences of men, is to assert, that there is no difference between Christianity and Judaism. But we know, from our Lord's own words, that Elijah's spirit was not to be the spirit of the disciples of the Messiah. And this is the point which I wish to press on you with regard to this doctrine of the Restoration of the Jews. Believing, as I do, that the doctrine is not to be deduced from the word of God by any right interpretation of its contents, I believe also, that no clergyman can hold it, with all its proper consequences, without receiving serious injury to his own spirit, and therefore, according to his power and influence as a teacher of others, without injuriously affecting the spirits of those who are instructed by him. For, in order to hold the doctrine in question, he must, as it appears to me, adopt such a mode of interpreting Scripture, as will oblige him, if he be consistent, to recommend, for approval and imitation, sentiments, which, though they might well exist in the minds of God's servants under an imperfect dispensation, ought now to be considered as utterly opposed to the mind of Christ, and therefore, by the help of his Spirit, to be

struggled against and overcome, by those who desire to be like him.

It is under the influence of this conviction that I think it worth while to oppose the doctrine of Jewish Restoration;—not simply because it is untrue, but because, being untrue, it has, in close connexion with that style of scriptural interpretation which must be adopted by those who hold it, a direct tendency to affect injuriously the spirit of their Christianity.

I write these concluding words on the anniversary of our Saviour's birth; and I heartily wish, both for yourself, and the preacher, and for all our Restorationist friends, every Christian blessing.

I am,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

W. WITHERS EWBANK.

EVERTON,  
*Christmas-day, 1849.*

THE END.

